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LETTER DATED 18 APRIL 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

We would like to take this opportunity to repeat publicly what we have already undertaken on a private and bilateral basis at several different levels of our Government, and that is to offer our most sincere condolences to the families of the two recently killed French soldiers of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and to the French Government. We do feel betrayed and bitter regarding the inadequate response of the world Powers to the aggression and ethnic cleansing perpetrated against our Republic and people. None the less, we are appreciative for the help that we have received and continue to view it as a desirable contribution to the survival of our people and country. Most importantly, even in our bitterness and intense struggle for survival, we are capable of differentiating between the political leaderships that have lacked the necessary will on the one hand and, on the other, the United Nations personnel who, with their commitment and courage, attempt to mitigate the suffering and this lack of political will.

It is on this issue of differentiation that we would like to dwell for a moment. We have recognized the moral and political flaws of not drawing a distinction between the political powers that have become comfortably numb to the cries and struggles of Bosnia and, conversely, those who are there, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with us experiencing our pain and fight for survival. Unfortunately, it appears that, on the other hand, those who continue to lack the political will have increasingly resorted to the opposite, that is, equation, to in fact rationalize their lack of political will.

This strategy of equation has been stretched beyond limits, and has become pervasive even in the debate regarding the responsibility for the killings of the two French soldiers, Sergeant Ralph Gunther and Corporal Eric Hardoin. We have no choice in our situation but to accept the position of the UNPROFOR analysis that the physical evidence is inconclusive. What we cannot accept is that the inconclusiveness renders "both sides" somehow equally blameworthy, or worse, the reckless speculation and innuendoes of some political figures allocating guilt to our Government.

The Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina gives its assurances that there is no basis to believe that any Bosnian soldiers were involved in this tragic incident.

Potentially "lacking direct physical evidence", responsibility can still be theorized on the basis of a history of behaviour and motive. As to the first point, the Karadžić Serbs have been involved in a systematic campaign of obstruction, harassment and even murder of United Nations personnel. The humanitarian objectives of the United Nations mission run counter to their strategy of terrorizing and targeting civilians. They have also been allowed to believe that they can "bully" and intimidate the United Nations-mandated forces. We cannot absolutely guarantee the behaviour of every individual in our forces; however, the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not and will not engage in a similar campaign and will hold accountable individuals who act illegally or in an unauthorized fashion. No Government can hold itself or its citizens to a higher standard.

Needless to say, the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina views all those who deter attacks against our civilian population, especially those erecting anti-sniper barricades or anti-sniper patrols, as our allies in pursuit of the same goal of protecting our civilian population.

So once again we must question the motivations of those making baseless and reckless accusations. Political exploitation of this unfortunate situation must be avoided by all. Two objective conclusions can be drawn:

First, the targeting of two French soldiers in a "safe area" by snipers who have continually murdered civilians is not related to the existence or lack of a cease-fire. Certainly, the lack of a political settlement has been a major factor that continues to make Bosnian civilians, soldiers and United Nations personnel potential targets, but United Nations personnel and Bosnian civilians continue to be targeted regardless of the cease-fire. Two, until such time that the Karadžić Serbs accept the Contact Group peace plan, which the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina has done for almost a year, the security of the Bosnian civilians and those who defend them, including United Nations personnel, will be most assured by the proper resolve to respond to these criminal acts and a commitment to avoid further erosion of the United Nations mandate within the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, it would be most absurd for certain Powers to unduly press, or even threaten, observance of a marginal cease-fire and an untenable status quo, while they continue to contend simultaneously that they are not prepared to impose a durable peace, even if it is their very own peace plan. More concretely, if a cease-fire is to be imposed, then why not impose a comprehensive peace plan, the international community's Contact Group peace plan?

May I ask for your kind assistance in distributing the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

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